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E.O. 12065: XDS 8/18/00 (RUSER, CLAUS W.) OR-M
TAGS: MILI, PINS, BL, AR
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA AND US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS - CONVERSATION
WITH AIR FORCE GENERAL GARCIA

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ON AUGUST 12, OVER LUNCH GENERAL JUAN GARCIA (AIR FORCE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL), WHOM I HAVE KNOWN SINCE HIS TOUR IN WASHINGTON AS AIR FORCE ATTACHE, DISCUSSED WITH APPARENT CANDOR THE ARGENTINE ACTIONS IN BOLIVIA AND REACTION TO POSTPONEMENT OF THE BOWDLER VISIT.

3. ON BOLIVIA, HE CLAIMED, THE DECISION TO PROCEED WITH THE COUP HAD BEEN GARCIA MEZA'S. THE COUP COULD NOT HAVE COME AT A WORSE TIME; IT SHOULD HAVE COME, IF AT ALL, EITHER MUCH EARLIER OR MUCH LATER. THE ARGENTINE ADVICE, GARCIA CLAIMED, HAD BEEN THAT SILES ZUAZO BE PERMITTED TO TAKE OFFICE AND THAT HE BE REPLACED ONLY AFTER HE DEMONSTRATES HIS INCAPACITY TO GOVERN. GARCIA MEZA, HOWEVER, HAD RESPONDED THAT HE COULD NOT WAIT; LEFTIST INFILTRATION WAS PROCEEDING TOO RAPIDLY. (I SPECIFICALLY ASKED WHETHER THE DESIRABILITY TO DEFER A COUP HAD BEEN AN AIR FORCE POINT OF VIEW; HE ALLEGED IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S.)

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4. REACTION TO POSTPONEMENT OF BOWDLER VISIT. GEN. GARCIA (LIKE ALL MY OTHER INTERLOCUTORS) STRESSED ARGENTINA'S GOOD WILL TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. AS EVIDENCE, HE CITED THAT THERE WAS VIRTUALLY NO ANTI-AMERICAN GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED MATERIAL IN THE ARGENTINE PRESS. (COMMENT. THIS IS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT FOR THE PRESS.) GENERAL GRAFFIGNA WAS PERSONALLY INTERESTED IN FINDING WAYS TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS DESPITE BOLIVIA. (COMMENT. I EXPECT TO CALL ON GRAFFIGNA, WHO HAS BEEN OUT OF TOWN, IN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO.)

5. GENERAL GARCIA WONDERED HOW WE SAW BOLIVIA'S FUTURE, WHAT CURRENT US OBJECTIVES WERE, AND HOW US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS COULD BE IMPROVED. HE RAISED THE IDEA OF AN ARGENTINE EMISSARY TO WASHINGTON. PURSUANT TO THE DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS, I DISCOURAGED THE IDEA, NOTING THAT THE TIME WAS NOT RIGHT FOR THIS.

RUSER

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